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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR WATERS/ABRAMS/SINGH

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TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: SETTLERS EXPANDING AROUND HEBRON

REF: A. A) JERUSALEM 01918
[B](#). B) TEL AVIV 2287

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. On August 6, Poloffs visited the southern Hebron Hills. They observed how Susiya settlement and Avigail outpost are expanding and how the area's settlements and outposts stretch across the hilltops south of Hebron. PolOffs saw the IDF manning special security zones (SSZs) that encompass the settlements and extend the are of land unavailable for cultivation by Palestinian residents. This area is known for being home to some of the most aggressive and ideological settlers. On August 3, one settler from the area attacked a UN vehicle, which also carried Israeli journalist Amira Hass. End Summary.

Settlement and Outpost Expansion

[1](#)2. (C) On August 6, Poloffs viewed settlements and outposts along Route 317 south of Hebron, including Karmel, Susiya, Maon, Avigail, and Yattir. According to Peace Now and Breaking the Silence activists, outposts in this area are being established outside existing settlements, and new structures are being added to existing outposts. PolOffs saw four new outposts next to Susiya settlement and four new mobile homes next to the Avigail outpost on their August 6 visit. Throughout the area, they also saw newly planted Israeli olive trees in steel barrels, both on and off land designated as IDF special security zones (SSZ).

Susiya Settlement

[1](#)3. (C) According to Peace Now and Breaking the Silence activists, these settlements and outposts create a strategic hilltop perimeter around Yatta, an Arab village of 20,000 on Hebron's southern outskirts. PolOffs saw near Susiya an IDF base, adjacent to an ancient synagogue and archaeological site, that is used to maintain the SSZ surrounding Susiya. Peace Now reports that the Susiya settlement is 243 dunams, but the surrounding SSZ is nearly 4000 dunams or sixteen times the actual settlement area.

[1](#)4. (C) PolOffs saw thirteen tent dwelling Palestinian families encamped along the edge of the SSZ. The IDF has issued demolition orders for their structures, which the families are appealing, according to the activists. As PolOffs surveyed the area, a group of settler children walked between the Arab tents and drew water from the well that is on land that Palestinians cannot access. The children continued to the ancient synagogue, followed by a Canadian and a Spanish activist with a video camera.

Aggressive Community of Hilltop Outposts

¶5. (C) Traveling northwest from Susiya, PolOfs saw Avigail outpost which consists of two permanent structures and four newly placed mobile homes. An additional four mobile homes were recently removed by the IDF, according to activists. Young settlers established this outpost in 1999, and it is now maintained by a reserve IDF Major and his pregnant wife, according to an activist who grew up with the Major and remains friendly with him.

¶6. (C) The settlers in this area are known as some of the most aggressive and ideological in the West Bank. Three days before PolOfs' visit, a resident of Mitspe Yair, an outpost with several mobile homes and a fledgling grove of olive trees, attacked a UN OCHA car that also carried Israeli journalist Amira Hass. According to OCHA staff, he climbed on the hood of the vehicle, shattered the windshield with his fist, and sent glass shards into the OCHA driver's eye. (Note: Photos taken by OCHA staff from inside the car during the attack emailed to NEA/IPA. End Note.) OCHA staff say the assailant was taken into custody and released on the evening of August 3. On August 6, PolOfs observed that the area around Mitspe Yair seemed calm.

¶7. (C) Next to Mitspe Yair, PolOfs saw Lucifer Hill, an outpost established eight years ago by a South African Afrikaner who converted to Judaism. According to activists, the outpost sustains itself by hosting teenagers during summer months who want to learn about "life on the frontier." They say they have witnessed settler youth at the camp spending their days "harassing Arabs" in the wadis below Lucifer Hill.

WALLES